

24th August 2012

The Egg of the Philosophers

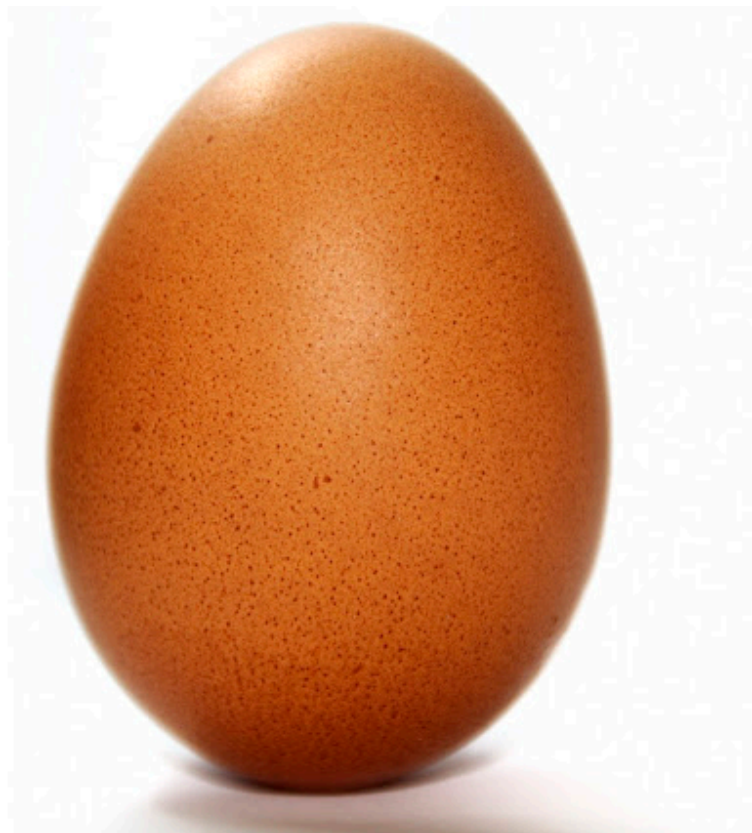
Good morning,

I wish in the following article to evoke an important symbol present in the alchemical treatises: **The egg of the philosophers** .

I remember a dream I had a few years ago that left a strong impression on me:

"In the dream I am standing on the side of a road. I see a car coming which stops right in front of me and which is driven by my father. My father remains in the vehicle and from his seat stretches out his arm and gives an egg. I grab this egg and I don't quite know why but I understand that I have to eat it. So I eat this egg."

In this dream it seems that it is a question of filiation between my father and myself. My father arrives by car, that is to say, if I may say so, with his own autonomy and hands me an egg. But beyond this filiation, I felt that something was happening that I didn't understand right away. Indeed, I felt that the egg represented something much more than what it is commonly associated with and it took me a while to understand.



[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-KUOoovM9jC4/UBf6MbxXAml/AAAAAAAAAB70/EYGMfd_WSWs/s1600/Oeuf.jpg]

Roger Bacon , Franciscan monk and alchemist of the twelfth century, in his treatise *"De Secretis operibus artis et naturae"* (*"On the assistance of works of art and nature"*) attributes to Aristotle *"Im libro Secretorum"* (*"I am the Book of Secrets"*) the following words:

"O Alexander, I want to tell you the greatest of secrets. Take this stone which is not a stone, present at all times, in all places... It is called the philosophical egg. Carl Gustav Jung writes: "In alchemy the egg represents chaos as the adept conceives it, the prima materia in which the soul of the world is captive. From the egg - symbolized by the round cooking vessel - soars the eagle or the phoenix, the liberated soul - identical, in the final analysis, to the Antropos which was imprisoned in the embrace of Physis." ("Psychology and Alchemy" - Page 266)



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"The Philosophical Egg"

Extract from the "Codex Palatinus Latinus" - 15th century manuscript

Let's look at the picture above:

We see in the center an egg from which emerges a two-headed eagle. Each of the eagle's heads is crowned. It is the double eagle which symbolizes the spiritual and the temporal.

The egg symbol is almost universal. It contains life within it and it is by a simple slow and natural cooking done by the mother that it allows a being with a future in the world.

Since the Greco-Egyptians in fact the alchemical process of Opus was compared to a hatched egg.

The egg has a liquid part (the yolk and the white) and a solid part. It is mineral (the shell) and animal in nature.

An egg indeed contains the four elements, the three substances of the work and the principle of opposites.

The egg symbolizes the representation of the totality of the macrocosm but on the scale of the microcosm.



[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-dDxKUFOLKme/UCYF_TsMd1I/AAAAAAAAACBc/e7Z1ssC6pAE/s1600/Oeuf+cosmique.jpeg]

"The Cosmic Egg" - William Blake - 1804/1808

Marcelin Berthelot writes: "It has been said that the egg is composed of the four elements, because it is the image of the world and that it contains the four elements within itself. It has also been called "stone that turns the moon", stone which is not stone, stone of an eagle and brain of alabaster. (...)

The shell of the egg is an earth-like element, cold and dry; it has been named copper, iron, tin, lead. These are the four imperfect metals, which serve for the transmutation and composition of gold and silver.

Egg white is divine water: egg yolk is couperose; the oily part is fire.

The egg has been called the seed, and its shell the skin; its white and its yellow, the flesh; its oily part, the soul; its aqueous part, the breath or the air."

("Collection of ancient Greek alchemy" Paris – 1885)



[<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-ltJXrcQMf8I/UBf9O7wkpGI/AAAAAAAAB80/fLZqN1-9L94/s1600/Aurora+Consurgens+-+L%27oeuf+des+Philosophes+-+D%C3%A9but+XVI%C2%B0+si%C3%A8cle.jpeg>]

"The Philosophers' Egg" - Aurora Consurgens - Early 16th century

In the alchemical treatise of the *"Levé de l'aurore"* (*"Aurora Consurgens"*) it is written:

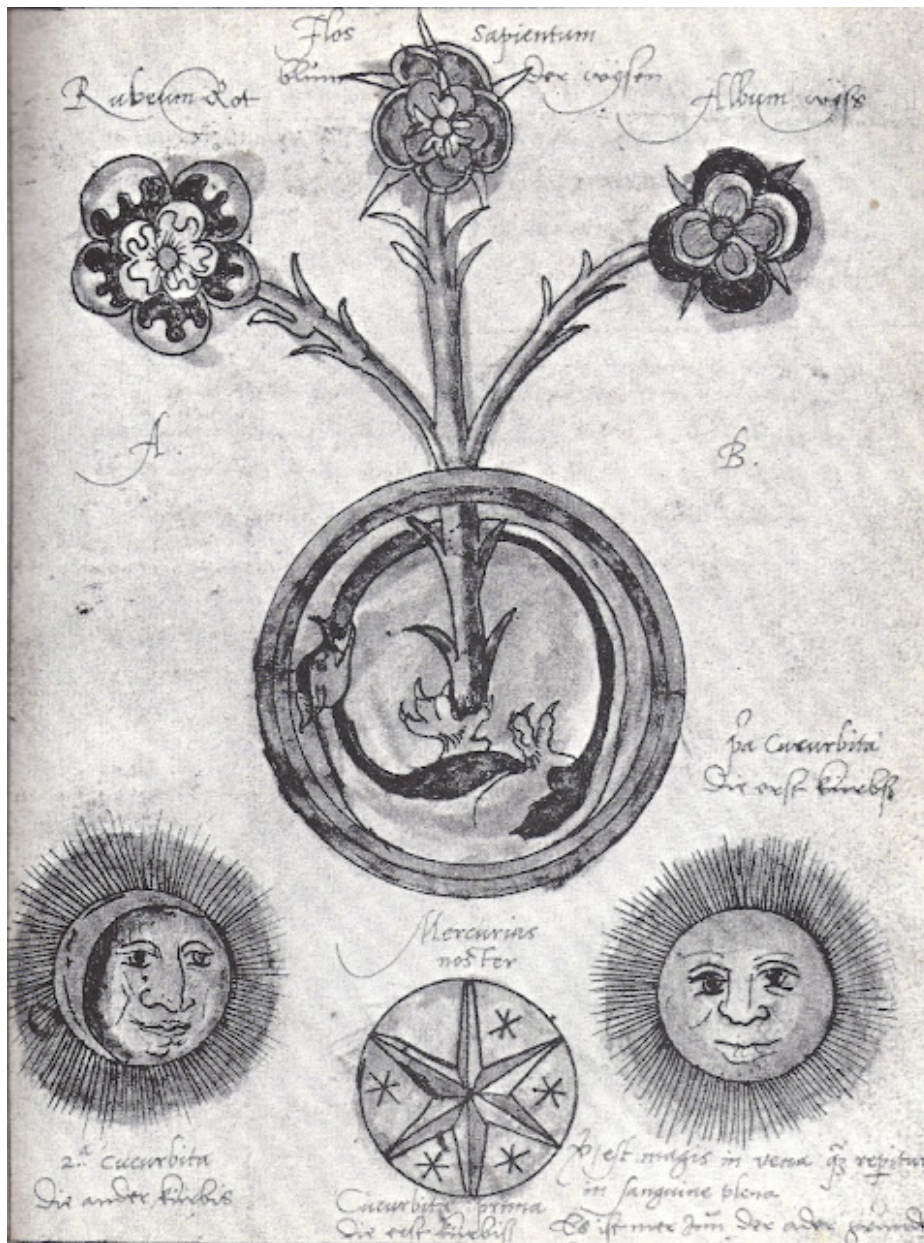
*"Art is comparable to the egg in which four things are found. The shell is the **Earth** , and the white I " **Water** , the very fine membrane which is under the shell, is Air . Yellow is **Fire** .*

*The fifth element, the **quintessence** , is the chick. Alchemists compare the embryo, the heart, aurora as well as lapis. They gave it the name of "red point in the center of the sun".*

Dom Antoine Joseph Pernety writes: *"Egg more commonly signifies the very material of the magisterium which contains the mercury, the sulfur and the salt, as the egg is composed of the white, the yolk and the skin or the shell which encloses the whole. »*

He continues: *"This matter is called egg, because nothing resembles better the conception and the birth of the child in the womb of its mother, and the generation of chickens, than the operations of the magisterium, and of the philosopher's stone;*

which should serve as a guide for Artists, and not the invented rules of vulgar Chemistry, which destroys everything, instead of building up. (Joseph Pernety - Extract from the " Mytho - Hermetic Dictionary" - 1787)



[<http://1.bp.blogspot.com/->

FwDD2uGd5s4/UBf_nW-5AXI/AAAAAAAAB9A/n-

kSGdU5CRg/s1600/L%27oeuf+philosophique+qui+donne+naissance+%C3%A0+la+fleur+des+sages+-+Manuscrit+Alchimique+-+1550.jpeg]

"The Flower of the Wise"

Alchemical manuscript from 1550 - Basel University Library

Let's look at the image above:

The philosophical egg contains the **Ouroboros** or serpent which devours its own tail. It is the illustration of the nature which is not yet delivered or the Materia prima which has not yet taken form.

Below the egg, the **Sun** and the Moon and between the two a star. This star symbolizes the philosophical Mercury.

From this egg hatch three flowers here : *The red flower of gold, the white flower of silver and between the two the blue flower of the Sages.*

Notice the two planes in the illustration: The Sun and Moon on an astronomical scale represent the **macrocosm** . Flowers on a human scale represent the **microcosm** .

Bernard le Trévisan writes: *"The cause for which the Philosophers called their Mercury Egg is also this, because everything like the egg is a round circular thing, containing in itself two natures and one substance, the white and the the yellow, and draws from itself another which has a soul, and life, and generation, namely when a chicken comes out of it, thus here the Mercury contains in itself two things of a nature, body and spirit, and draws from itself the soul and the life when the whole is spiritual, whence afterwards the generation of the true Elixir takes place, which made Mirandus say: This Egg draws from itself the life that it has , then after the soul and generation. »* (Excerpt from : « Treatise on the Egg of the Philosophers » XV° century)

Below are two illustrations from the early 17th century treatise: "**Speculum verritas**" ("Mirror of Truth") Manuscript kept by the Vatican Library in Rome:



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-znTNQljov0s/UBGBsaVgX1I/AAAAAAAAABo4/ZYTgfp4HKh8/s1600/Oeuf++des+Philosophes++1.jpeg>]

"Speculum verritas" - Early 17th century

Let's look at the image above:

Mercury or **Hermes** in the center holds the mercurial caduceus in his right hand and the sign of sulfur in his left hand. He stands upright on an egg containing the seal of alchemy: the **Ouroboros** .

The ouroboros represents "the totality". *"The serpent bites its tail because the end bears witness to the beginning"* .

The egg here is a representation of the "One the whole" . It is also the vase like the image of the world in which mercury (**white**) and sulfur (**yellow**) unite . That is to say, in the language of modern psychology, the union of the **unconscious** and the **soul** .



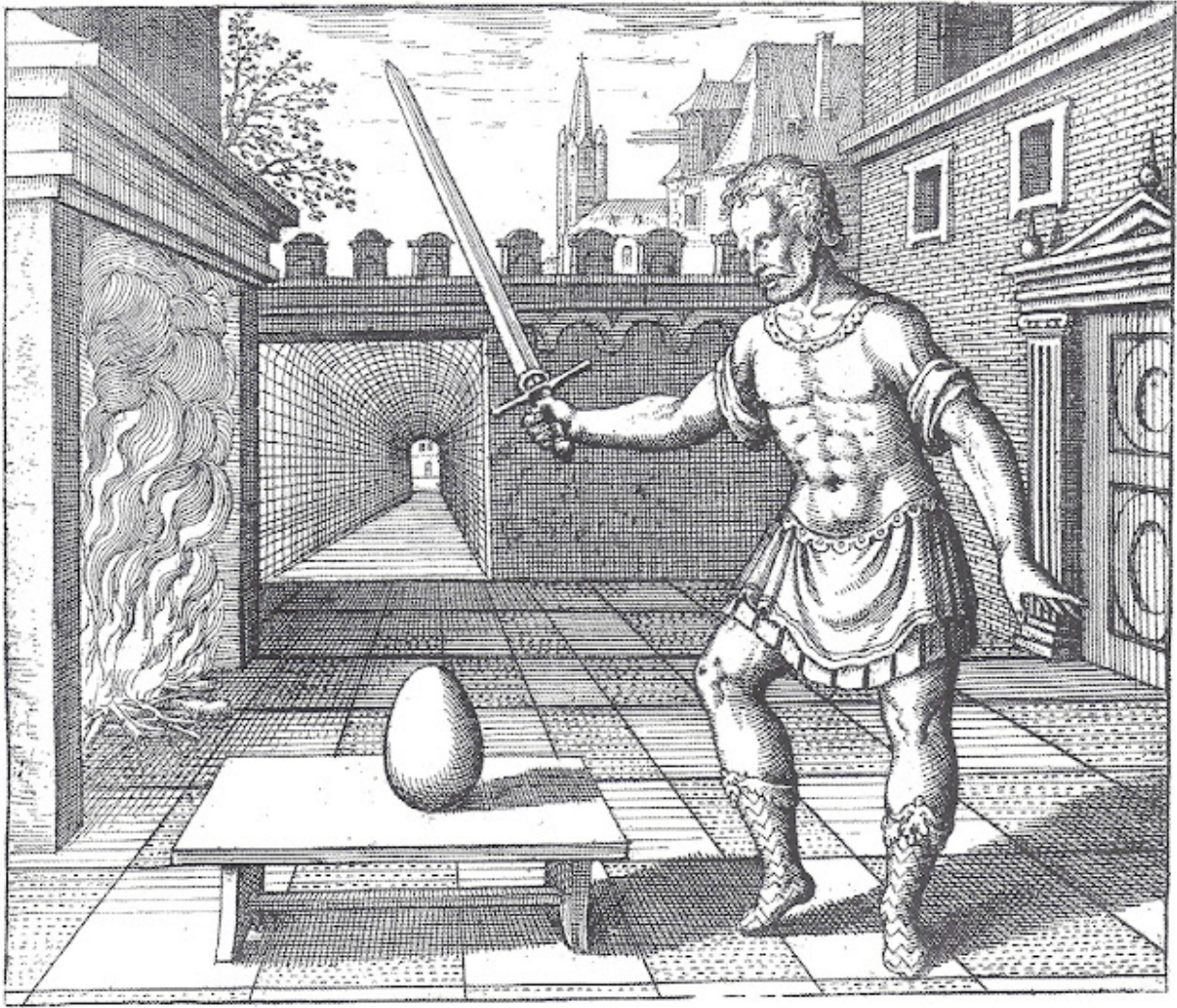
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"*Speculum veritatis*" - Early 17th century

Let's look at the image above:

An athanor is represented as the trunk of the oak in the center. Eggs are presented to **Vulcan**, god of fire. Eggs under the influence of the God of heat should give birth to the "*chicken of the wise*" whose head is red, feathers white and feet black.

Here are two illustrations taken from the "*Atalanta Fugiens*" ("Atalante Fugitive") by **Michael Maïer** (1618) : **Emblem VIII**.



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"Take the egg and hit it with a flaming sword"

Emblem VIII - Excerpt from the Treatise on Atalanta Fugitive" by Michael Maïer

Let's look at the image above:

"Take the egg and strike it with a sword of fire" is an alchemical axiom attributed according to the authors to **Raymond Lully**. Michel Maïer illustrates this axiom with this emblem.

The egg is the subject of the Art, which must be struck with the double-edged sword of the Secret Fire. It is a question of subjecting the work to fire. **Mars** thus comes to the aid of **Vulcan**, and from the subsequent darkness of putrefaction will be born the hermetic chick.

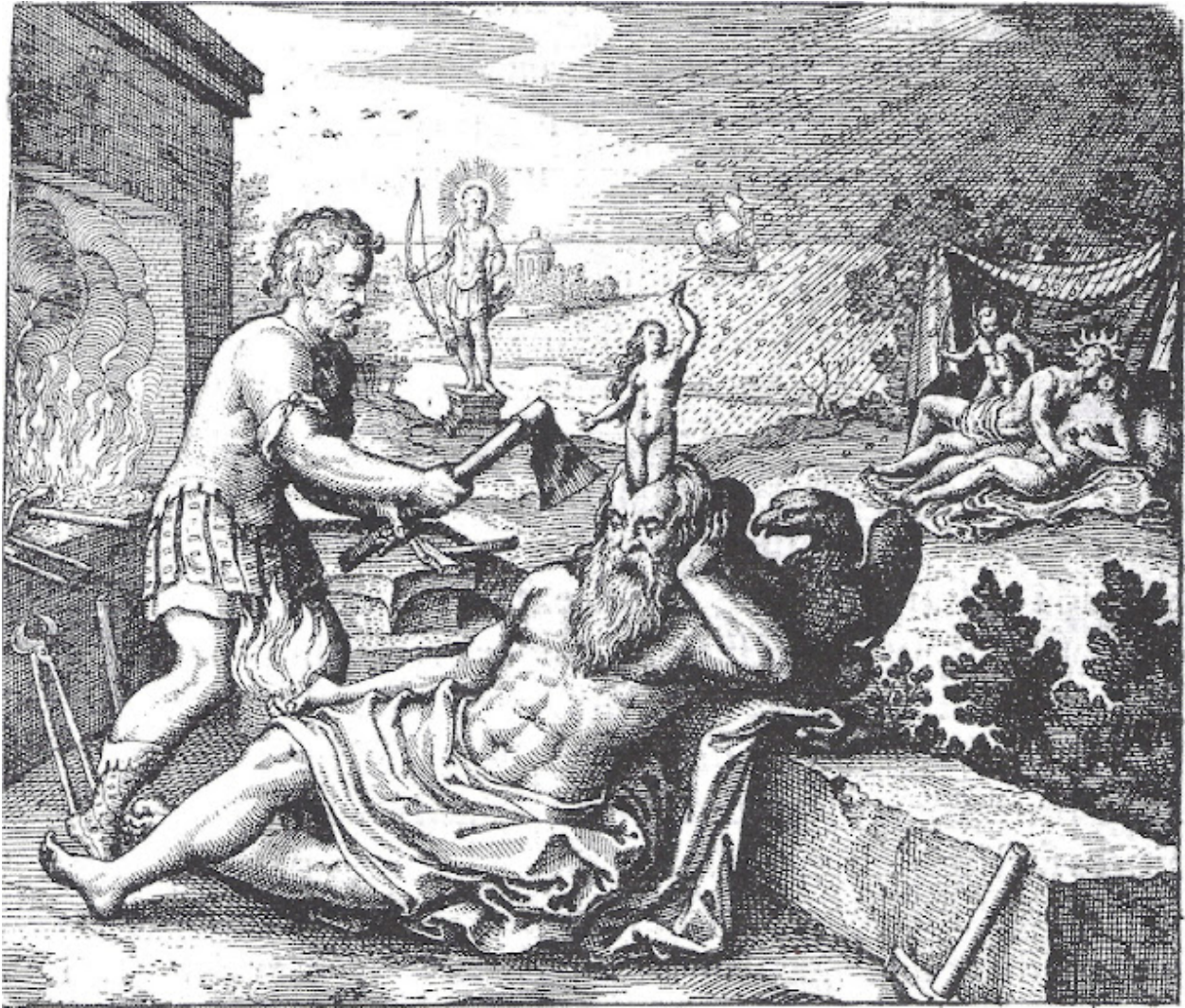
This is an eagle egg.

In the egg are the seeds of the male and the female which are united together.

The exterior heat is the first engine that allows the circulation of the interior elements and the natural transformation of the contents. Because specifies Michael Maïer who describes the process of transmutation:

"Water changes into air, air into fire and fire into earth. »

The second illustration from the *"Atalanta Fugiens"* ("Atalante Fugitive") by **Michael Maïer** (1618) : **Emblem XXIII**.



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Emblem XXIII: "*Aurumpluit, dum nascitur Pallus Rhodi, & Sol concumbit Veneri.*" ("Gold rains down when Pallas is born in Rhodes and the Sun sets with Venus.")

Let's look at the image above:

Vulcan (God of Fire) with a single blow of an axe, splits the head of **Jupiter**, relieving him of a terrible headache and gives birth to **Pallas** (Athena)

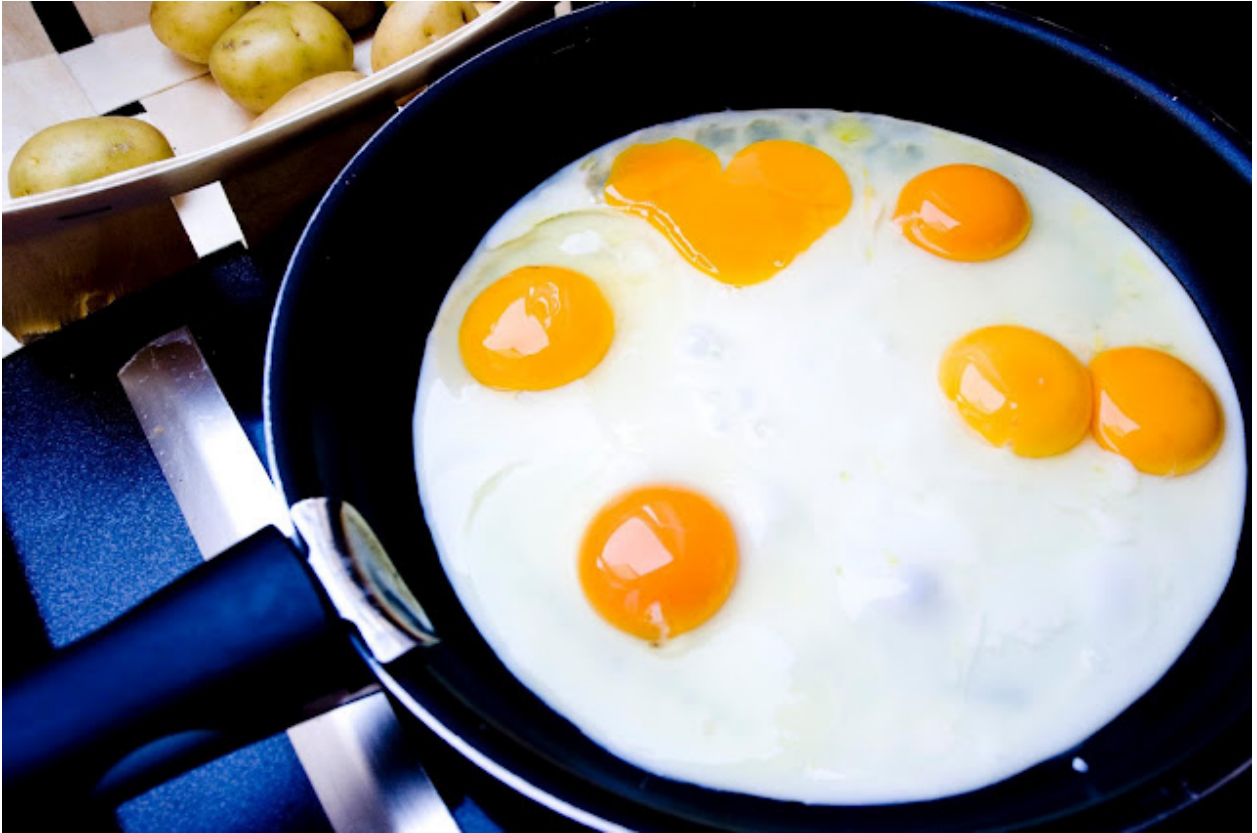
Note that a golden rain falls in the background on the island of Rhodes (The philosophical land where Bernard Le Trévisan would have discovered the secret of the Philosopher's Stone in 1472)

The **Sun** and **Venus** have a clearly sexual union which symbolizes the union of the Volatile and the Fixed. **Cupid** is an accomplice in this union which produces the Colossus of Rhodes in the background at the center radiating with majesty.

Athena is a symbolic representation of the thought function. For the alchemists of the past Athena symbolizes Mercury sublimated to the highest degree by coction (This is a technique traditionally used by women which consists of steaming like the bath of Mary the Jewess)

The golden rain on Rhodes refers to the myth of Cadmus which summarizes for philosophers the Great Work in its entirety. Indeed, the story tells that Cadmus sent by his father Agenor the King of Phoenicia in pursuit arrived on the island of Rhodes. Europe was her father's sister. Cadmus had a temple built on the island to the glory of Neptune, which he entrusted to the Phoenicians and offered presents to Minerva, including a magnificent copper vase.

The Colossus of Rhodes existed in antiquity



[<http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-PNTm4DXHc30/UDiVaZnbTTI/AAAAAAAAACFo/IVUOpJxBBo0/s1600/Oeufs+sur+le+plat.jpg>]

Here is an excerpt from the 1622 treatise *"Philosophia reformatata"* i.e. **"Reformed Philosophy"** by Johann Daniel Mylius:

*"Here you see our dragon
That the solar germ swells.
The artist can prepare it
For a modest expense.
One of the two is placed on the other
Which, in turn, rests in him.
It is there, glorious cohort,
That you will recognize your egg.
And what is, you will say, the meaning
Resplendent crowns?
It is that he prepares for his brothers
Abundance of golden presents."*



[<http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-ZKRQm8YFv8I/UBftsjeZWul/AAAAAAAAB4U/umJjo2WfMMU/s1600/Johann+Daniel+Mylius+-+Philosophia+reformata+-+1622+-+La+quintessence+unique+de+la+Pierre+Philosophale.jpeg>]

"The unique quintessence of the Philosopher's Stone"
Johann Daniel Mylius - Philosophia reformata - 1622

Let's look at the image above:

We see **the philosopher's egg** hatched by a dragon and from which emerges the **Rebis** of the philosophers which is surrounded by five crowns.

The dragon here represents the mercury of the philosophers, that is to say the unconscious. The philosophical egg, like the cosmic vase in other treatises, represents the scale of the microcosm. The egg here is dark in color because it must be cooked to hatch the Rebis. The egg is "the space", in which with the heat of the brooding dragon, the "**principle of opposites**" can emerge .

The five crowns all around the Rebis symbolize the **Quintessence** . The Quintessence resulting from the "chaos of the Sages" is of a very pure and spiritual content. It is like the synthesis of the four elements (*Fire, Earth, Air and Water*) of the four cardinal points (*West, North, East and South*) or, for the royal voice, of the four psychological functions (*Intuition, Feeling, Thought and Sensation*) Represented here in the form of crowns, it announces the advent and sovereignty of the **Philosopher's Stone** .



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"Le Rebis" - Thirteenth illustrations of the treatise

"Splendor Solis" (The Splendor of the Sun) by Solomon Trismosin

Solomon Trismosin writes: "Thus we see in an egg all the elements combined with matter to form a source of perfect nature, just so much as is necessary for our noble Art. »

Let's look at the image above:

We see here a very fine example of an androgyne that the alchemists call " **Rebis** ". This being standing on a single pair of legs is composed of a winged trunk half man, half woman. He has sweet faces with blue eyes and blond hair. Notice the **gold** radiance of the male face and the **silver** of the female. It wears the three fundamental colors of the opus. Indeed, his coat is **black** (*Nigredo*) , the left wing is **white** (*Albedo*) slightly purple, the right wing is **red** (*Rubedo*) Note that the frogs of his coat (black like lead) are gold (Sun) This androgyne holds in his hands on the male side a small shield whose edges are orange-gold colors and has a mirror in its center. The female side shows the Golden Egg or **Egg of the Philosophers** .

Here below are three illustrations taken from the "**Mutus Liber**" or "*Silent Book*" because this treatise does not contain any text but only images. These are the illustrations from the oldest edition published in 1622:



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Second plate of the "Mutus Liber" - 1677

Let's look at the image above:

We notice two shots: Below, the alchemist couple kneeling near the Athanor in prayer posture.

At the top, two angels who present the alchemical egg which contains **Neptune** with Diana and Apollo at these sides.

The upper plane represents the **macrocosm**. It evolves in the celestial scale in the spheres of the Gods. The lower plane represents the **microcosm** and is on a human scale.

Notice that Neptune holds in his hand the Trident of "**Triple Dissolution**" which produces the distinction between *Mercury, Sulfur and Salt*. The presence of the trident also explains the birth of **Diana** and **Apollo** on the island of Delos and their presence here. (Read about this article [The shadow](http://aqua-permanens.blogspot.fr/2012/07/lombre.html) [<http://aqua-permanens.blogspot.fr/2012/07/lombre.html>])

In modern language this means that the distinction: Spirit, Soul and Body (*Triple dissolution*) appears distinctly thanks to the lower psychological function (here represented by Apollo) The anima is here represented by Diana. We could say that they together constitute "the function of Eros" and/or function of the Link.

The night of chaos has ended and the brightness of the spiritual sun now illuminates the work. The children Diana and Apollo with the Moon and the Sun above their heads are the parents of the Philosopher's Stone. When the angels present the philosophical egg of the Gods notice that Heaven opens and light separates from darkness.

What does this couple of alchemists who unite in prayer represent here? It represents the Mercury and the Sulphur, the Spirit and the Anima, the Active principle and the Passive principle, the conscious and the unconscious.



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Eighth plate of the "Mutus Liber" - 1677

Let's look at the image above:

Here, the angels carry in **the philosophical egg** the Mercury of the Sages. With his winged helmet Mercury stands upright on the earth with the Sun and the Moon at his feet. The philosophical Mercury comes from the union of Apollo and Diana (Sun and Moon) which Neptune had brought together in the previous illustration. Mercury has a funny caduceus in his hand. It is a stick that has twice five snakes that we could call the quintessences of opposites. The number "ten" clearly symbolizes that a unit is formed. The ten birds in the sky

symbolize the careful repetitions of the same operation.

Here is therefore represented a purification step that requires time and patience. Notice that two of the birds bring the spagyric symbols of the twin saline substances of the Secret Fire to the Egg of the Sages.



[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-6YGTvYJGhYA/UCYVbqn_Gkl/AAAAAAAAACCg/BJUlriCfxrl/s1600/Oeufs+sur+eau.jpg]

"Prayer alone is insufficient, but if it precedes action or if it accompanies it, the result that is sought can exceed all hope. (Stanislas Klossowski de Rola – "The Golden Game" - Page 282 -1997)



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Eleventh plate of the "Mutus Liber" - 1677

Let's look at the image above:

The ground beneath Mercury's feet is gone, and the God who guides souls is simply standing on the Sun and Moon.

The spagyric symbols of the salty substances of the Secret Fire brought by the birds in the previous illustration are now integrated. This is what the alchemists of old called sublimation.

Notice that the lamp in the athanor is on and the laboratory curtains have disappeared. The Mercury of the Sages is now the Mirror of nature, in which its hidden truths are reflected.

I draw your attention to the relationship between the top and the bottom of the last three illustrations taken from the *"Mutus Liber"*, ie the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm.

In the conversations between "Jacques le fataliste" and his master written by Diderot at the end of the 18th century, this question always comes up: *Does what takes place on earth happen because it is written in heaven or is it c is because it is written in the heavens that it takes place on earth?*

This question simply poses the relation of the microcosm to the macrocosm.



[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/-4B9Y5ON1lxw/VC25wINd5II/AAAAAAAAI18/PAY_k9frWZU/s1600/Oeufs%2Bplantes.jpg]

Let's not forget the old adage of the Sages:

" Help yourself and heaven will help you ! Because

there comes a time when in the same way that our consciousness cannot evolve without considering the unconscious, it is simply impossible to advance without the help of what I dare to call "God". Thanks for reading. Good teacher!

Posted 24th August 2012 by [L'alchimiste](#)



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